



Southeast Fishery Bulletin

National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Regional Office, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505

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FB16-041

Control Date for Gulf of Mexico Reef Fish Headboats

On June 15, 2016, NOAA Fisheries published an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking to set a control date of December 31, 2015, to notify the public of a possible eligibility criterion for participation in the reef fish headboat management program being developed in Amendment 42 to the Fishery Management Plan for the Reef Fish Resources of the Gulf of Mexico.

In the Gulf of Mexico, there is a federal charter vessel/headboat permit for reef fish that does not distinguish between headboats and charter vessels. The Southeast Region Headboat Survey (Headboat Survey) collects catch and effort data from headboats in the southeast region; thereby, producing a catch history for each vessel included in the survey. In addition, for fishery managers, the Headboat Survey continues to be the sole source for effort and landings estimates for the headboat component as a whole. For these reasons, the vessels eligible to participate in the program being developed in Amendment 42 are those vessels with federal charter vessel/headboat permits for reef fish that also have landings in the Headboat Survey. The availability of vessel-specific landings data may allow development of an allocation-based management program using those landings histories.

This notice informs participants in the Gulf reef fish fishery that the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (Council) intends to consider limiting participation in any allocation-based management program developed through Amendment 42 to only vessels with landings in the Headboat Survey on or before December 31, 2015. Vessels participating in the Headboat Survey after this date may not be eligible to participate in an allocation-based program that could be developed as part of Amendment 42, and landings after this date may not be used in determining allocations. An analysis of specific biological, economic, and social effects will be presented in Amendment 42.

The establishment of a control date does not commit the Council or the NOAA Fisheries to any particular management regime. The Council may or may not make use of this control date as part of the requirements for participation in any allocation-based management program for reef fish headboats. Fishermen are not guaranteed future participation in the program, regardless of their entry date or level of participation in the reef fish fishery before or after the control date under consideration. The Council also may choose to take no further action and rescind the control date.

How to Submit Comments

NOAA Fisheries must receive comments on this control date no later than **July 15, 2016**. You may submit comments on the notice, identified by "NOAA-NMFS-2016-0056", by one of the following methods:

- Go to the Federal e-Rulemaking Portal <http://www.regulations.gov/#!docketDetail;D=NOAA-NMFS-2016-0056>, click the "Comment Now!" icon, complete the required fields, and enter or attach your comments. NOAA Fisheries will accept anonymous comments (enter "N/A" in the required fields if you wish to remain anonymous). You can also attach additional files (up to 10MB) in Microsoft Word, Excel, WordPerfect, or Adobe PDF file formats only.
- Mail written comments to Susan Gerhart, Southeast Regional Office, NMFS, 263 13th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

All comments received are a part of the public record and will generally be posted for public viewing on the [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) website without change. All personal identifying information (e.g., name, address, etc.), confidential business information, or otherwise sensitive information submitted voluntarily by the sender will be publicly accessible.